

Wheels in Motion

From bikes to blades, putting wheels in motion is exciting for a child. It gives him a sense of freedom and accomplishment. But it also means responsibility. Your child should know the rules of the road and wear the correct safety equipment when on a bike, skateboard, skates or scooter.

Wear a Helmet

Head injuries are the leading cause of permanent disability and death from bike crashes. Bike injuries send more than 575,000 riders to the doctor or Emergency Department each year in the United States. Of those, nearly 50,000 suffer serious head injuries. Most head injuries can be prevented by wearing a bike helmet.

Obey the Law

In 1993, Georgia passed a law requiring all children younger than age 16 to wear an approved bike helmet while riding a bike on public roads, sidewalks and bike paths.

Children younger than age 1 riding as passengers on bikes must be carried in an infant sling or bike trailer. Children between the ages of 1 and 4 may be carried in an infant sling, bike trailer or child passenger bike seat.*

Buying a Helmet

- Take your child with you when buying a helmet to make sure it fits.
- Buy a helmet that meets or exceeds current safety standards developed by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), the American Society of Testing Materials (ASTM) or the Snell Memorial Foundation. All bike helmets are required to meet standards developed by the CPSC. There should be a sticker inside the helmet that tells what standards it meets.
- Buy a helmet your child likes.
- Buy a helmet made for the sport or activity your child is doing. If such a helmet is not available, get a multi-sport helmet. Visit the Bike Helmet Safety Institute at www.bhsi.org for more information.**

How to Wear a Helmet

Your child should always wear a helmet when riding a bike or scooter, or skating.

- Use the sponge pads that came with the helmet to secure a good fit. The helmet should be snug, only moving 1 inch when pushed from front to back. Use a combination of pad sizes and place them where needed.
- Be sure the front edge of the helmet is no more than two finger-widths above your child's eyebrows.
- Make sure the front and back straps meet in a V-shape just below your child's ear. The front straps should be vertical and the rear straps should be flat, without any slack. If the helmet leans forward, adjust the rear straps. If it tilts backward, tighten the front straps.
- Be sure all straps are equally tight when the chin strap is buckled.
- Test the chin strap. When your child opens his mouth, the chin strap should be snug. One finger should fit between the chin and the chin strap when your child's mouth is closed.

Get the Right Bike

- Buy an age- and size-appropriate bike. Do not buy a bike for your child to grow into.
- Make sure it has a bell or horn.
- Take your child shopping with you. When he is sitting on the seat, the balls of both feet should be on the ground.
- Make sure the bike has a light and reflectors on the front, back and sides.

Know the Deal with Wheels

Supervise your child until he can skillfully ride and obey the rules of the road. Children should only ride on sidewalks and paths until they are at least 10 years old and can show they know the rules of the road. It is important to watch children until they have the needed traffic skills and judgment. Almost all serious bike injuries happen when a child breaks one of these rules of the road:

- Rule 1:** Stop before riding out into traffic from a driveway, sidewalk, alley or parking lot. Look left, right and left again. When you are absolutely sure there is no traffic, enter the road.
- Rule 2:** Ride on the far right side of the road with the traffic.
- Rule 3:** Obey traffic signals and stop signs, as if your bike were a car.
- Rule 4:** Look back and yield to traffic coming from behind you before turning left at intersections.
- Rule 5:** Do not ride after dark. Many bike collisions happen in darkness, near-darkness or bad weather. If you have to ride at night, the bike must have a headlight, a flashing taillight and reflectors. Keep reflectors clean and check them regularly to make sure they are securely attached.***

Skateboards, Skates and Scooters

- Check equipment before skating or riding to make sure there are no hazards such as loose, broken or cracked parts, slippery top surfaces or wheels with nicks and cracks.
- Wear appropriate safety gear including a helmet, wrist guards, and elbow and knee pads. If wristguards interfere with your child's ability to safely steer the scooter, he may want to leave one or both wristguards off.
- Be sure protective gear fits properly and does not interfere with your child's movement, vision or hearing.
- Never ride in the street. Ride on smooth, paved surfaces that are free of traffic. Avoid streets or surfaces with water, sand, gravel or dirt.
- Do not skate or ride at night.
- Limit skateboard, skate or scooter use to one person at a time.
- Never hitch a ride from a car, bus, truck, bike, etc.
- Do not try a move if it seems risky.
- Do complicated moves only in designated areas.
- Do not let children age 8 and younger use bikes, skateboards, skates or scooters without close adult supervision.
- Use caution when skating or riding downhill. If the hill is steep, step off and walk to the bottom of the hill.

**Section 40-6-296(e)(l) of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated*

***Children's Healthcare of Atlanta is not responsible for the accuracy or content of this Web site.*

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